

Recently, devastating storms -- including tornadoes and flooding -- have hit communities throughout North Mississippi.

We are working closely with the governor's office, MEMA, FEMA, local officials, and the American Red Cross as these agencies continue Joint Preliminary Damage Assessments (PDAs) for Individual Assistance.

On April 29, the President signed a major disaster declaration for the state, triggering the release of federal funds to help families and communities recover from the severe storms. We will continue to work with authorities at all levels of government and I will share new information as it becomes available.

Residents of Attala, Choctaw, Holmes, Monroe, Union, and Yazoo Counties affected by the April 23rd-24th storms may register for federal emergency assistance programs online at <http://www.disasterassistance.gov> or by calling 1-800-621-FEMA (3362) or 1-800-462-7585 (TTY) for the hearing and speech impaired. The toll-free telephone numbers will operate from 7 a.m. to 10 p.m. CT seven days a week until further notice.

Disaster Recovery Centers

The Choctaw Disaster Recovery Center is set up at the Weir Gymnasium, 265 Marion Kelly Dr., Weir. The center is open from 8 a.m. to 7 p.m., seven days a week until further notice.

To speed the recovery from the May 1-2 storms, tornadoes and flooding, the Mississippi Emergency Management Agency and Federal Emergency Management Agency dispatched Mobile Disaster Recovery Centers to Lafayette and Tippah counties Monday. An existing center continued to operate in Alcorn County.

The below Recovery Centers will operate this week Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 7 p.m. The

Alcorn County location will also be open Saturday 8 a.m.to 7 p.m. The locations are as follows:

Open until further notice □

Alcorn Arena

2800 South I

At the recovery centers, people who suffered losses can get person-to-person assistance from specialists skilled in many disaster-related subjects, including available grant programs and low-interest disaster loans.

Disaster officials ask that before visiting the center, people first register online at www.disasterassistance.gov

or by calling

800-621-FEMA (3362)

or

TTY 800-462-7585

. The toll-free numbers are staffed 7 a.m. to 10 p.m. CDT until further notice. Help is available in all languages.

People who suffered uninsured or underinsured damages or losses in the following counties may be eligible for disaster assistance programs: Alcorn, Benton, Tippah, Tishomingo, and Lafayette.

For others affected by the May 1st-2nd storms, please use the emergency information below for immediate assistance.

MEMA Offers Cottages to Central Mississippi Tornado Survivors

The Mississippi Emergency Management Agency will sell Mississippi Cottages to tornado survivors who are financially unable to rebuild in the disaster declared counties of Attala, Choctaw, Holmes, Monroe, Oktibbeha, Union, Warren and Yazoo that can aid homeowners and renters with housing needs and necessary assistance. Cottages are used and will be sold to occupants “as/is.” A final inspection of the unit will guarantee that all appliances are in working order, but no warranty will be given on the cottage or the appliances.

The price of the cottage will be determined based on the survivor's income. Potential occupants will have to provide income verification and/or sign an affidavit stating what documents they are unable to provide. Cottage prices will begin at \$351 for one-bedroom units and \$567 for two-bedroom units. A limited amount of ADA units will be available for purchase as well, providing that the potential buyer has documented proof of their disability.

Potential occupants will be able to do an intake with MEMA staff in the Disaster Recovery Centers locations. During the intake, they must bring the following documents:

- Current property tax receipt and deed.
- Board of health acceptance letter for their sewer/water.
- If not the property owner, a new land lease with a minimum term of 20-year land lease from the individual or entity having clear title to the land upon which the cottage is placed.

All potential buyers must have funds available for purchase of the cottage and show proof that they can afford the costs associated with maintaining the cottage on a permanent basis.

They must also provide proof of and maintain homeowners' insurance; specifically all hazards insurance, including flood and wind, and any other insurance required by the local jurisdiction. Additionally, potential buyers must also have a functioning sewer/septic system approved by the board of health. Potential buyers will be able to use FEMA assistance for any work required to cover the costs associated with purchasing a cottage.

To determine if you are eligible to purchase a Mississippi cottage you must first register for assistance with FEMA by calling **800-621-FEMA (3362)**. From there a case worker will determine your eligibility. MEMA staff are on hand at the Disaster Recovery Center and will be able to provide additional requirements that potential buyers must meet in order to purchase a cottage.

The Mississippi Emergency Management Agency received a \$281 million grant from FEMA to develop and produce safer, more comfortable disaster housing as an alternative to FEMA travel trailers and mobile homes after Hurricane Katrina.

Disaster Food Assistance Program

The Mississippi Department of Human Services has been approved by the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service, to provide food assistance in the form of a Disaster Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program in the following Mississippi counties: Monroe, Oktibbeha and Union. The program is open to individuals not normally eligible for SNAP, but were affected by the April 24 storm.

Residents of the affected areas counties who are not currently receiving SNAP benefits may qualify for this temporary assistance for a one month period if their home was damaged or destroyed or they have disaster-related expenses or food loss as a result of the storm. Eligibility is based on available income and resources less a standard disaster deduction.

Those applying for DSNAP assistance will be asked to provide their driver's license or picture identification along with proof of residency, such as a utility bill, and the social security numbers and dates of birth for all members of their household. Applicants should apply in the county where they reside.

DSNAP application sites will operate for five days.

- Tuesday, May 11 through Friday, May 14; 9 a.m. - 6 p.m.
- Saturday, May 15, 8 a.m. - 12 p.m.

County locations:

- Monroe County DHS, 104 ½ N. Mattubba Street, Aberdeen.
- Oktibbeha County DHS, 213 Yeates Street, Starkville.
- Union County DHS, 923 Fairground Spur Rd., New Albany.

Current SNAP recipients in the above listed counties -- as well as Attala, Choctaw, Holmes,

Warren, and Yazoo Counties -- who live in the areas affected by the April 24th storm may be eligible for replacement benefits due to food loss. These recipients will need to declare their loss at their county DHS office no later than May 14.

Important phone numbers, information, and websites:

Below is a list of important contact numbers as well as resources you may need to gather more information to help friends and family affected by the storms. I also encourage you to forward this important information to your family and friends. Please check back on my website for updated information.

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General assistance: Call 2-1-1 (currently operating M-F 7 AM to 6 PM) or 1-866-472-8265. United Way's Mississippi 211, a telephone information and referral line, opened its call center to assist individuals affected by the storm. Any individual looking for information or assistance to identify the services best suited to meet his or her needs is eligible to call. 2-1-1 Mississippi is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week. However, it is not a crisis hotline.

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MEMA General Public Information Line: 866-519-MEMA or <http://www.msema.org>

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MEMA Media Information Line: 866-920-MEMA.

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For shelter information, call the American Red Cross: 1-800-REDCROSS (1-800-733-2767)

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The American Red Cross: 1-800-733-2767 or <http://www.redcross.org>

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Charities, businesses, and individuals who would like to volunteer please contact the Mississippi Commission for Volunteer Service: 1-866-472-8265 or www.volunteermississippi.org

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For hotel accommodations visit www.visitmississippi.org/emergency □

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For information on Emergency Federal Aid visit FEMA

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For Health information for Evacuees visit the Department of Health and Human Services

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The Red Cross also offers a safe and well database to help families locate their loved ones and ensure they are safe. To register yourself or a family member visit the American Red Cross by clicking [here](#) .□

Information on How to Help □ Storm Victims

The Mississippi Commission for Volunteer Service will open a volunteer reception center at the Ashland Volunteer Fire Department at 8 a.m. May 6. The volunteer reception center will serve Benton and Tippah Counties. Volunteers and tornado-affected residents in Benton and Tippah Counties may call 1-888-353-1793 for more information.

The volunteer reception center serving Choctaw County is located at the Mill Springs Missionary Baptist Church at 620 Stuart-Weir Road in McCool. This is also a distribution center for tornado-affected residents. Residents may request volunteer and AmeriCorps assistance at the

volunteer reception center.

The volunteer reception center serving Attala and Choctaw Counties is located at the Ebenezer Volunteer Fire Department at the intersection of HWY 14 and Ebenezer Road in Ebenezer. The Red Cross is also coordinating a distribution center for tornado-affected residents at this location. Residents may request volunteer and AmeriCorps assistance at the volunteer reception center.

The Mississippi Commission for Volunteer Service has asked that charities, businesses and individuals who would like to volunteer to register at www.volunteermississippi.org or call (888) 353-1793. MCVS has asked that volunteers stand by until they are contacted.

For more information on how to volunteer, call 888-353-1793 or visit www.msema.org and click the volunteer link listed under “NEWS.”